

# RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER

*Melanerpes carolinus*



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Range

Red-bellied and other woodpeckers are important nest providers for many other species. The holes they excavate in dead trees, poles and fence posts are used by bluebirds, wrens, chickadees and titmice to name but a few. It is important for many bird and animal species that we leave dead trees whenever it's safe to do so!



Birds

# RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER



*Melanerpes carolinus*

## Appearance

**Length:** 10 inches

**Wing span:** 16 inches

**Weight:** 2 3/4 ounces

Male red-bellied woodpeckers are medium sized birds that have red caps and hind necks, black and white barred backs and tails. Their belly feathers are off white with a reddish tinge. Females are similar to males but lack the red hind neck.

## Behavior

**Habit:** Diurnal, cavity building, altricial, omnivores

**Diet:** Insects, nuts, fruits and berries

**Breeding territory:** 1 pair to 14 acres

Courtship between red-bellies includes mutual tapping and v-shaped flights. Most red-bellies remain year round. In urban areas their nests are often taken over by starlings after they have finished building them. They excavate a new nest hole each time they renest during the season.



## Habitat

Red-bellied woodpeckers are found in eastern Texas and U.S. They prefer forests, swamps or wooded suburban habitats.

## Now You Know!

- › It takes only 7 to 10 days for a pair of red-bellied woodpeckers to carve a home in a dead tree.
- › Red-bellied woodpeckers will occasionally use bird houses.
- › Red-bellied woodpeckers have been known to store food in hollow trees.
- › You can attract red-bellied woodpeckers to bird feeders by providing them with peanuts.

## Life Cycle

**Sexual maturity:** Less than a year

**Mating season:** Spring and summer.

Red-bellied woodpeckers usually nest 2 or 3 times during a season.

**Gestation:** Eggs hatch in 12-14 days, the young fledge 24-27 days after that.

**No. of young:** 3-8, usually 4-5. Eggs are 1 inch long and white.

## More Fun Facts!

*The woodpeckers bill is a multi-use tool for food gathering and even more unusual, to get their courtship message out. Male woodpeckers do not sing well, so they use their heads, literally. In the spring, woodpeckers are especially attracted to any sound that resonates, including aluminum shed roofs and even the hoods of cars, much to the annoyance of their human owners.*

## Woodpeckers & Man

Humans feel that dead trees are dangerous and remove them. This reduces the number of places that woodpeckers, and all the other wildlife that count on them for homes, can live. Woodpeckers sometimes use telephone poles in the place of dead trees. Occasionally they will try to excavate a nest through the wooden siding of someone's home, or use the metal siding to increase the noise of their tapping to attract a mate.